

**COURT ORDER NO.2015\_\_\_\_\_**

**STATE OF TEXAS**

**COMMISSIONERS' COURT WORKSHOP  
MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 6, 2015**

**COUNTY OF COLLIN**

On Wednesday, May 6, 2015, the Commissioners' Court of Collin County, Texas, met in a Workshop at The Landing, Myers Park & Event Center, 7117 County Road 166, City of McKinney, Texas, with the following members present, and participating, to wit:

Judge Keith Self  
Commissioner Susan Fletcher, Precinct 1  
Commissioner Chris Hill, Precinct 3  
Commissioner Duncan Webb, Precinct 4

Absent: Commissioner Cheryl Williams, Precinct 2

Also present were Myers Park Advisory Board members Judy Florence, Jeff Durham, Mark Page, Amanda Love, Jennifer Rogers, Norman Gidney, Rutledge Haggard, Marianne Wells, Steve Wright, Stephen Kallas and Chris Kern.

1. Judge Self called to order the meeting of the **Collin County Commissioners' Court Workshop** at 10:00 a.m.

2. **Public Comments.**

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

3. **AI-39827** Future plans for Myers Park & Event Center.

Judge Self thanked the Myers Park Advisory Board for attending the round table discussion and asked the Board for ideas of what they might like to see for the park. Mr. Haggard expressed his appreciation for the Court's time and asked the Court for guidelines as to what it expects from the Advisory Board. Mr. Haggard said the labor and resources required to maintain and grow the park are an important issue as is employee turnover. The demands on the employees are so great that they are not able to use their comp time and turnover is high.

Bill Bilyeu, County Administrator, said the Court looks at comp time for all departments every year. Myers Park employees accrued 600 hours of comp time last year. A regular full-time employee works 2,000 hours a year, therefore, 600 hours of comp time spread among the staff does not justify hiring another employee. Mr. Bilyeu compared Myers Park comp time to other departments that experience peak seasons. One suggestion was to bring in temps during these peak times. When compared to the Jail or Animal Services, Myers Park comp time is not greater than any other department and they don't rise to the level of a staffing need. Mr. Bilyeu suggested changing the work schedules to include weekends since that is when a majority of the comp time is earned. Mr. Haggard said it's very difficult for employees to use their comp time because of their schedules and scheduled events. Judge Self said the work schedules need to be adjusted so comp time is not built up to begin with. We cannot staff year round for peak periods. The Court suggested the Board and staff manage this internally.

There was a brief discussion regarding job turnover. Ms. Florence has lost three full-time employees since January. Mr. Wright said this park is a funnel for employees to find other jobs within the County. Mr. Wright asked if they could convert a part-time position into a full-time position. Mr. Bilyeu said if there are enough hours to justify it, it could be done. The problem is the peak is on Friday night to Saturday night so taking this position to full-time won't help. Mr. Bilyeu said more staff has been added to Myers Park percentagewise in the last five years than any other department in the County. The salary for Myers Park pays more than the Facilities Department, but Facilities does not turn over as much as Myers Park. There are a limited number of positions at the park with no upward mobility.

Mr. Wright would like some incentive to keep the employees longer and suggested going to a differential like other departments in the county. Mr. Bilyeu said the differential is \$1 per hour which is not a big incentive to make people want to stay longer. We're looking for a bigger change. Judge Self said it is an idea that the Court will look at. There was a brief discussion on job descriptions and certifications. Commissioner Fletcher asked about the compa-ratios and how this compares to municipalities. Mr. Bilyeu said compa-ratio really only applies to long-term employees.

Judge Self quoted Commissioner Williams who said this is both an active park and a passive park. The active portion is the Show Barn, which is maxed out and could be bigger, and the Stall Barn. There is the Landing, the House, and the six gardens: annual, perennial, herb, Earth-Kind, vegetable and the Grape Myrtle and Rose gardens. Most of the revenue comes from the Landing and the Show Barn. The Judge asked about the new Amphitheater and the rest rooms. Ms. Florence said they have talked to schools about having their band/choir concerts at the Amphitheater but no one has booked it yet. Ms. Florence said the Boy Scouts are very happy with the rest rooms. The Pole Barn is staying busy and is third in line for revenue generation. The old Baxter farm is there but the farm house has been torn down and the farm implements belong to the Farm Museum.

The Confinement House, which is historic and owned by the County, is in bad shape. Judge Self asked if there needs to be approval at the state level to do rehab work on the house. Ms. Rogers said we just have to follow the restoration guidelines. The Judge asked the Court to consider using historic grants for the rehab. The Farm Museum doesn't have a lot of visitors but the numbers have been increasing in the last six months since the \$1 admittance fee was removed. There will also be a new maintenance shop built onto the back end of the Farm Museum. The equipment in the barns will be moved into the shop and then the barns will be torn down.

Judge Self said the Collin McKinney house will most likely be moved to Myers Park and rebuilt. Mr. Haggard asked who would maintain the house and where the funding for the maintenance would come from. There was a brief discussion about the back half of the property which is used for 5K events, mud runs and other activities. Ms. Florence explained that they don't run events, they facilitate them.

Judge Self said the County spent \$640,000 on the park last year and the park brought in \$285,000. Mr. Bilyeu said there were other costs associated with the park. These include Facilities, which spends approximately \$25,000 out of pocket, and Public Works, which spends approximately \$40,000 out of pocket. Mr. Durham said the new maintenance building will cost almost \$70,000 and will be 40' x 60' with a concrete pad.

Commissioner Fletcher said the purpose of the libraries and parks is not to make money but to serve the community. The Commissioner suggested creating Friends of Myers Park to enable the community to contribute in different ways. Ms. Florence said there is a 501(c)3 fund for the Farm Museum but not one for Myers Park. The Commissioner said 4H and FFA groups could get involved to help raise money because this park is integral to what they are studying. Ms. Florence explained they had attempted a sponsorship program, but due to the complicated processes involved, it never got off the ground.

Mr. Haggard said the electrical issues in the Show Barn need to be addressed. It is a safety issue and during events there is a person that stays by the breaker switch to throw the breakers. With Frisco planning to open four more high schools this will become even more of a problem. Mr. Bilyeu said an engineer was hired to design what is needed at a cost of \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Commissioner Webb said Myers Park has the opportunity to be an important part of Collin County's history. The Commissioner is very supportive of taking the County's Parks and Open Spaces money and putting it into Myers Park to make it more accessible and attractive for more utilization. He is supportive of building a second air-conditioned building with parking, expanding the Show Barn, and supporting the master gardeners. Since there are few arboretums, this could be an attraction. The Commissioner comes to look at the flowers and is impressed with what is done with very little money. This could also bring more weddings to the park. The park needs attractions to bring people here. The Commissioner also agrees that if we have historical buildings on the site, we need to use our money to maintain those buildings. The Commissioner wants to fully utilize the park and make it better known throughout the County. He is also willing to support taking the remaining money in Parks and Open Space and using it to build improvements at Myers Park and to see if voters are willing to support a new bond issue. If the non-profit sector will not keep history in place, the County has an obligation to at least amass it and protect it. The Commissioner said Parkhill is not event driven and should stay the way it is.

Commissioner Hill agrees on the importance of Myers Park. With the increase in urbanization and diminishing rural areas, Myers Park will have a more important role in preserving part of the County. Determining the vision for the park will tell us how to address the issues of staffing, comp time and facilities. There is a very legitimate public purpose for this facility but there are also purposes that are not core functions of government. The Commissioner broke down the categories of usage for the park. They are 1) a working farm with agricultural education and preserving our agricultural past; 2) historical preservation; 3) parks and open space, whether left native or not, is still an example of an open space where people can visit; 4) community gardens and possibly an arboretum type garden; and 5) a conference and event center. These categories of usage give us different directions on how to staff, build, and maintain this asset and are legitimate core functions.

Some of the events we have here are along the lines of agriculture education like 4H groups. But events such as private weddings have no public purpose at all. Intentionally building facilities for private events that will put a strain on staff and taxpayers does not interest Commissioner Hill. The Commissioner does agree with building facilities for the core purposes of the park.

Commissioner Hill wanted to let the park staff know that he is very thankful for the work they do. The issue of overtime and comp time is due to trying to bring in revenues from events. However, bringing in more revenue is not the Commissioner's principle concern. If it serves a legitimate public purpose, it will be paid for through tax revenues. Overworking our staff to support private events is not in the taxpayers' best interests.

The Commissioner agrees with Mr. Bilyeu on the comp issue. On the macro level it doesn't rise to the level of needing more staff. On the micro level, if a staff member has 200 hours he cannot use, that is a problem. The Commissioner would remedy that by taking the strain off of staff for private events.

Commissioner Fletcher agrees with both Commissioners. Myers Park is a resource that we are in support of and we don't want to lose the park. Since we have this facility, Commissioner Fletcher has no problem with continuing to allow it to be used for private events and suggested increasing the fees if necessary. That may force people to go back out into the private sector and support private businesses. The Commissioner strongly supports the arboretum idea and suggested having garden clubs from across the County adopt a patch which they would maintain. This could draw people to the park.

Judge Self said the Court is in agreement that we need to fund what we have now immediately and is willing to commit a large part of the remaining Parks and Open Space budget. We are willing to fix the Confinement Building and build the Maintenance Building. The Judge would like more discussion on the new Landing location and to work through the other issues. Commissioner Webb clarified that he is not proposing building more facilities for private use only, but we need to make a minimum investment to open the park for more public use.

Judge Self said they are in agreement that history to a certain extent is a core county function. We are mandated by the State to have a Historical Commission. Norman Gidney, Lifetime member of the Advisory Board, said the park was deeded to the County in 1969. Mr. Gidney then relayed some of the early history of the park.

Judge Self asked what the high schools and 4H Clubs need. Ms. Florence said that's where the Show Barn expansion comes into play. They had an extra 20 head of cattle this year and we were not equipped to handle it. Some of the kids didn't pass so we were able to set up cattle ties in another area to accommodate what they needed this year. With the influx of schools and programs, Judge Self suggested making the Show Barn expansion a tier one project. Judge Self said land use may become a problem in the future.

Commissioner Hill asked what the agricultural, historical, gardening and recreational communities want to see here. The Commissioner would like these organizations to inform the Advisory Board as to what they want to see evolve here. Providing back to the community is our legitimate purpose, not making money.

Commissioner Fletcher agrees with Commissioner Hill and suggested a fee structure for private events that would include a \$50 or \$100 fee to go towards historical preservation.

Ms. Wells said in the early days of the Farm Museum the curator had started an Oral History Program. A few years ago Ms. Wells opened a cupboard and found the tape recordings which had been forgotten for decades. The tapes were given to Ms. Rogers who has been digitizing them to get them posted on the website. Judge Self suggested coordinating the preservation of the tapes with Stacey Kemp, County Clerk. Ms. Rogers said Ms. Kemp attends many of the workshops and they have collaborated on projects before.

In summary, Judge Self asked for input from the historical, agricultural, recreational and gardening groups as to what they need. (Time: 11:30 a.m.)

#### **4. AI-39828 Park Hill Prairie Presentation.**

Jeff Durham, Parks & Open Spaces,

Mr. Durham presented a PowerPoint presentation on Parkhill Prairie which is one of the oldest parks in Collin County. It is located in the northeast part of the county east of Blue Ridge. The east line of the park is on the Hunt/Collin County line. The park consists of 436 acres and was purchased in 1988 for \$506,000 using 1983 bond funds. We received a grant of \$385,000 from Texas Parks and Wildlife for improvements and the land that was purchased was used as the match. This funded utilities, restrooms, picnic shelters, gravel drives, walking trails, landscaping and fencing. The park was dedicated on April 28, 1990.

The park has an annual operating budget of approximately \$12,000 of which \$5,100 goes toward the caretaker, \$5,300 for tractor mowing and \$1,600 for electrical, water and trash. Only 15 acres of the 436 acres are mowed and the rest is left as native prairie. Mowing takes place six to nine times per year depending on the weather. In addition to the caretaker and mowing contract, there is a Personal Services Agreement with a farmer. Since 225 acres of the property on the west side are in the flood plain, the farmer keeps the bottom land planted in hay. He also keeps gravel on drive areas, grades as necessary and makes repairs to perimeter fences and gates.

There is a five-year prairie restoration plan with the Nature Conservancy funded by the 2007 Parks & Open Space Bond Funds at approximately \$5,000 per year. This includes herbicide applications, prescribed burns and removal or treatment of encroaching vegetation.

Commissioner Webb asked how many people visit the park on an annual basis. Mr. Durham said there is no staffing so he does not have statistics on this. Commissioner Hill asked if there was overnight camping at the facility. Mr. Durham said there was not. The park opens at sun up and closes at sun down. Ms. Wells said the park is very well known among master naturalists and they have said the County is a visionary in saving that virgin prairie. (Time: 10:10 a.m.)

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Court did not recess into Executive Session. There being no further business of the Court, Judge Self adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.